

PEPPER-CRUSTED FILET MIGNON

Serves 4

If you prefer a very mild pepper flavor, drain the cooled peppercorns in a fine-mesh strainer in step 1, toss them with 5 tablespoons of fresh oil, add the salt, and proceed. Serve with Port-Cherry Reduction or Blue Cheese-Chive Butter.

5 tablespoons black peppercorns, cracked
5 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil
1 tablespoon kosher salt
4 center-cut filets mignons, 1½ to 2 inches thick, 7 to 8 ounces each, trimmed of fat and silver skin

1. Heat the peppercorns and 5 tablespoons of the oil in a small saucepan over low heat until faint bubbles appear. Continue to cook at a bare simmer, swirling the pan occasionally, until the pepper is fragrant, 7 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool. When the mixture is at room temperature, add the salt and stir to combine. Rub the steaks with the pepper mixture, thoroughly coating the top and bottom of each steak with the peppercorns. Cover the steaks with plastic wrap and press gently to make sure the peppercorns adhere; let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.
2. Meanwhile, adjust an oven rack to the middle position, place a rimmed baking sheet on the oven rack, and heat the oven to 450 degrees. Heat the remaining 2 teaspoons oil in a 12-inch heavy-bottomed skillet over medium-high heat until faint smoke appears. Place the steaks in the skillet and cook, without moving the steaks, until a dark brown crust has formed, 3 to 4 minutes. Using tongs, turn the steaks and cook until well browned on the second side, about 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and transfer the steaks to the hot baking sheet. Roast 3 to 5 minutes for rare, 5 to 7 minutes for medium-rare to medium. Transfer the steaks to a wire cooling rack and let rest, loosely tented with foil, for 5 minutes before serving.

PORt-CHERRY REDUCTION

Makes about 1 cup, enough for 4 steaks

1½ cups port
½ cup balsamic vinegar
½ cup dried tart cherries
1 large shallot, minced (about 3 tablespoons)
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
Salt

1. Combine the first five ingredients in a medium saucepan; simmer over medium-low heat until the liquid is reduced to ¼ cup, about 30 minutes. Set aside, covered.
2. While the steaks are resting, reheat the sauce. Off the heat, remove the thyme, then whisk in the butter until melted. Season with salt to taste. Serve, passing the sauce at the table with the steak.

BLUE CHEESE-CHIVE BUTTER

Makes about ½ cup, enough for 4 steaks

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
½ cup crumbled mild blue cheese, room temperature
⅛ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons minced chives

Combine the butter, cheese, and salt in a medium bowl and mix with a stiff rubber spatula until smooth. Fold in the chives. While the steaks are resting, spoon 1 to 2 tablespoons butter on each one.